

2013 CA Water Plan Update  
Water Dependent Cultural Resources Strategy

**MEASURING WORM SAVES FALCON**

Told by Mrs. Molly Kinsman Pimona  
in 1918

First Edition Recorded and Modified by Edward Gifford, 1918

This Edition Modified by the Hon. Ron W. Goode, 2011

Falcon went hunting. Coyote went with him. Together they camped. Falcon picked up a small smooth stone, he put it under his head for a pillow. Next morning he found himself on top of a great wet rock, as tall as a very large tree. Coyote became really excited. He bit the rock in his attempt to climb it. He tried every way to reach Falcon, but failed.

Then he sought the help of Mockingbird, a great chief. Mockingbird told Coyote to send the Mice up for Falcon. The Mice tried, but failed. Then they had Flicker try, for they thought he might reach Falcon with his long tongue. He tried to climb to where Falcon lay on his back, but he too failed. Woodpecker tried to climb the great rock and also failed. Nuthatch scaled the rock, but he was too small to bring Falcon down.

They went after Measuring Worm who lived in the lower foothills. Coyote went for him first, but Worm paid no attention to Coyote. Dove went down for him. Dove was a Chukchansi and talked to Measuring Worm in Chukchansi, which was the language Worm spoke. "All right," said Measuring Worm. "Take your fires off the ground, for I am going up there with the water. I'll go up in the water." He came up into the mountains. He asked where Falcon was. All the people were dancing around the great rock, making the dust fly.

Measuring Worm wrapped himself about with a milkweed fiber carrying net, in which he intended to place Falcon. He scaled the rock in two steps and brought Falcon down.

Chief Mockingbird said, "Let us all gather and go out to hunt deer." They hunted and killed some deer and had a great feast. Then they flew away, except Coyote.

Before they flew, they sent Coyote down to get a basket of water. Coyote slid up and down the great smooth rock, when he went for the water. All of the people flew over him and made fun of him. Then he thought to himself, "I too shall fly." He tried, but he fell, hitting the ground hard. He climbed a pine tree. "I am going to be an eagle," he said. He again tried to fly, but fell to the ground.

Then he saw a gopher poking his head out of the ground. He caught the gopher and ate it. "I am going to be a coyote," he said.

**Commentary:**

The setting of the story is back when animals were people, before animals turned into people. Back when water was a powerful element and not just a commodity. The animal people used fire to cleanse the land, just as the Native American burned to enhance their resources. When the land is burned the water table is not sucked up by overgrown vegetation or dense tree canopies. Therefore, springs continually overflow when the land has been cleansed. Which means the water table raises after the land and resources are burned.

So Measuring Worm told the mountain people (Nium) that when they take the fire off the land he would raise up with the water and rescue Falcon. The water rose quickly and in two steps Worm reached the top of the great wet rock.

The story goes on, where coyote is sent to get water in a basket at which point the other animals fly off and tease him because he can't fly. But, once again, resources are referenced; water, basket, gopher-food, pine tree, indicating a healthy livelihood for the Native people as they came forth into the human physical realm.